CLARIFICATIONS ON THE STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Killing of Official of the Border Roads Organisation in Afghanistan

SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA (Rajasthan): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Sir. I would just like to ask some pointed clarifications. Is it true that there has been more than one case of abduction of foreign workers in Afghanistan by *Taliban* in recent months? If, yes, what steps has the Government taken to safeguard our workers? Is it also true that the National Security Adviser, Shri Narayanan, has hinted Pakistan's involvement in Mr. Kutty's killing? Similarly, Mr. Nirupam Sen, the permanent representative to the United Nations, has also mentioned that *Al Qaida* and *Taliban* continue to receive support from across the border, a veiled reference to Pakistan.

It was equally necessary to attack their networks that support them, their training camps, financiers and their safe havens, Mr. Sen said. What is the Government doing about Pakistan's involvement in the whole affair? Is it true that Taliban's profile has been increasing in Afghanistan in recent months? The U.S.A. and Afghan Governments are trying to win over Taliban Leader Mulla Omar by involving him in the Government. If it is true, what are the implications for India? Is it also true that the Talibans have their sanctuaries in Baluchistan, an area near Delaram, where Shri Kutty was working? Sir, in this case, the Taliban has changed its *modus operandi* and swiftly killed the captive. On earlier occasions, they held protracted negotiations before releasing the captives. If that is the case, what could be the inherent motive for change in the *modus operandi* of the Taliban in this case?

[MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN in the Chair]

Has the Government made any assessment? Is it true that once the road is built, it will be beneficial to Afghanistan, with a port in Iraq? That is what does not suit Pakistan and that is why they opposed the construction of that particular road where Mr. Kutty was killed. Has the Government taken note of grievances of the people of Shri Kutty's native village? What is being done to explain to them of the factual situation? How soon will the Government, with a time-bound programme, comply with its assurances to provide compensation, livelihood and security and other assured benefits to the bereaved family? Will the Government inform this House of the compliance of its assurances to the bereaved family? Has the Government warned Indians who are touring Afghanistan?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: It is a very long list of clarifications.

SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Sir, it is the last one. Has the Government warned Indians that they should not go to Afghanistan unless it is a must and be watchful like the U.S.A. and other countries do in similar situation? Thank you, Sir.

SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN (Kerala): Sir, first of all, the hon. Defence Minister's Statement is not full comprehensive, hence not satisfactory. Sir, there is a general impression among the people that the Government of India has not acted properly or has not acted with utmost caution and seriousness. This impression has come, especially from the people of our state because of the previous experiences which we had. Similar cases...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: You ask only pointed clarifications on the Statement.

SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Sir, I am not making a statement. As far as abduction in Iraq is concerned, previously three truck drivers were abducted. We know the steps, which the Government has taken to release them. There are so many instances. It is a feeling of an apprehension that the serious and utmost caution which the Government ought to have taken has not been taken. That is the first clarification, which I would like to seek from the hon. Defence Minister.

My second clarification is regarding para two of the statement. Facts are there. That Mr. Maniappan was abducted by the kidnappers on 19th November. It is a fact that the next day itself an ultimatum was given that the BRO should withdraw from Afghanistan within 48 hours. It is learnt from the media that the next day itself, the official spokesman of the Ministry of External Affairs very specifically and categorically stated that in no way the BRO would withdraw from Afghanistan. I do accept that it is the Afghan Policy of the Government of India. But was it proper to say at that time when Mr. Maniappan was in the custody of kidnappers or terrorist forces? Was it a correct tactical approach to say that the Government of India in no way withdraw from Afghanistan in case of BRO? This is my second clarification.

Now, I come to my third clarification. My third clarification is regarding para three of the statement. Para three of the statement goes to show that no effort was made by the abductors to contact either the Embassy or the BRO. The Afghanistan Government too was unable to establish contact with them. Sir, is it the responsibility of the abductors or the Government of

Afghanistan to make links with the abductors ? What our intelligence agencies are doing? Whether we are able to have any nexus or contact or connection or link with the forces so that efforts are taken to release Maniappan. Sir, I am only having pointed questions. Coming to para 4, it is stated, "Government of India made every effort possible to seek the safe release of Shri Maniappan Raman Kutty in cooperation with Afghanistan". Sir, my question is what efforts are made? And what happened to those efforts? It is not explained in the statement. What happened to the efforts taken by the Government of India?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Please be brief.

SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: On para 5, it is stated, "A group comprising officials from the Ministry of Home, External Affairs, Defence and security agencies was set up under the Cabinet Secretary to monitor developments on a regular basis". I do accept and appreciate the effort taken by the Government of India. But the previous experiences show that in most of the cases, such task forces are being headed by a Minister. Why in this case, a Minister has not been given the specific responsibility so as to monitor the situation or so as to lead the committee? That is the clarification. Sir, I am coming to another point. I would like to know about the relief which has been announced. The hon.Prime Minister, has announced — for and on behalf of the hon. Prime Minister, his media representative has announced—that Rs. 10 lakhs will be given as compensation. But it is quite unfortunate to read in the statement that it is only Rs. 9 lakhs. And now today, it has come out that the Central Government will be paying Rs. 5 lakhs as compensation and the State Government will be paying Rs. 5 lakhs as compensation. What is the actual compensation which is going to be given to the family other than PF other than gratuity, other than the dues which goes to him as part of his services? ...*(Interruptions)*... I am only asking pointed questions and not making a statement. Also, is there any military intelligence report dated 9th August that the BRO personnel will be attacked in Pakistan? Is there any military intelligence report? If there is, then, what is the action taken so as to have the security of the BRO personnel there? And the final question which I would like to seek is...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Please leave some questions for others also.

SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Sir, the National Security Advisor to the Government of India has made a very categorical statement, Mr. Santosh

Bagrodia has also just stated, that Pakistanis are behind it. And not only that, Sir, there is one more point. None of the Islamic countries in the world has condemned this brutal attack. What is his authority to say so? Also, I would like to know all these things which have come in the newspapers. Even the hon. Defence Minister's statements has come out in the media. We have gone back literally to the USA and we have also gone back to Iran to get them released. But nothing is there in the statement. I would like to seek clarifications on that point also.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Vijayaraghavan. Please be pointed and be brief. My request is, please be brief because it is 'clarification'. Whatever clarification has already been sought, you need not repeat it because anyhow the clarifications on that will come.

SHRI A. VIJAYARAGHAVAN (Kerala): Sir, I will not repeat any of the point raised by my colleague. Sir, I have to say one thing. I hail from State where two millions workers are earning their livelihood from abroad. Sir, this is the first time, we have received a coffin after such an incident. That seriousness is there. Sir, we are talking with a kind of feeling which you could not imagine. From each and every house, a person is living abroad. The Government is getting the foreign currency from there. You must be responsible to ensure the safety and security of the people who are working there. I want to raise that sentiment. Sir, my pointed query is this: With regard to the abduction of Maniappan Raman Kutty, we have recieved information. Naturally, we approached the Government. How many of them have been abducted? What are the names of the persons who have been abducted? We were in dark. The Government failed to give the details. The first information was that four persons were abducted by the Taliban including some Indians. Who were abducted? What are the names of the persons? There itself, we failed, the Indian authorities failed to give the details.

Only through the media, they contacted Kabul and found out this thing. That is the first thing. Why did you give such information?

Secondly, the BRO told that they did not have any detailed instructions from the Government as to how to find out this person. Only they have the information that some such thing has happened. What action should be taken by them, no such instruction has been given by the Central Government to the BRO. In fact, it is the BRO who is doing the work.

Thirdly, it was reported that nearly 2000 Indians are there in Afghanistan, and you know, there is no safety and security inside Afghanistan. Only at

one place there is security for Indians, that is,the Embassy of India inside Kabul. That is the only place where you have security and safety for the Indian nationals. So, such an incident has taken place. It was reported that when our Prime Minister was to visit Afghanistan, there was the problem of security. Some intelligence report was there, and an attempt was made from our side to provide security for our people through the Indian Army or through some other security measures. Why did we not implement that arrangement? What is the reason? How have we failed? We are aware that our people are working in an unsafe atmosphere inside Afghanistan. Our country has very close diplomatic relationship with Afghanistan. The Indian Prime Minister is one among the important VVIPs, who had visited Afghanistan. How did we fail to create that atmosphere? And diplomatically, how did we fail to provide safety for our workers who are in Afghanistan? From this experience, what have you learnt? This also we want to know.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Vijayaraghavan, please be brief. There are a number of hon. Members who want to seek clarifications. The other work will suffer.

SHRI A. VIJAYARAGHAVAN: This has been done by Taliban. In the statement, you have made a mention about Taliban. I do not want to go into the details. It has been stated therein that the perpetrators of this heinous crime must be brought to justice swiftly. How are we going to bring them under the purview of law? Secondly, since the organization involved in this heinous crime is Taliban, we have to keep an eye on the Pakistan also because, there are close relationship between Pakistan and Taliban. You have to develop a contact. So far, you have not been able to develop a contact. Why? Because we were thinking that the people of Afghanistan will develop a contact with the Taliban. Is there any contact between Afghanistan Government and the Taliban? No. Is there any contact between the Indian Government and the Taliban? No. How can we make a contact? You have to think about a third person. Nowhere in the statement you have mentioned this thing. You have to make a contact, either through the tribal leaders or through some journalists or through some news agencies. You are simply sitting here and giving sermons. That is not the way of doing it. What you have done in this respect? This country needs an explanations from the Government.

Finally, with regard to compensation, so many announcements have been made. I do not want to go into the details. I would like to submit only

one thing that the Government have to ensure employment for the widow of the deceased because, in the statement, it has been mentioned that you are providing education to the children of the deceased up to secondary level. In the State of Kerala, we have free education up to the secondary level. What extra help is the Government providing? I do not know. You should not make such statements because, you are the Government of India. Your statement has a validity. You have to inquire what they need. Without knowing their need, you are making a statement. This should not be repeated.

With regard to employment for the widow, there are doubts. The State Government is saying that tomorrow, we will give employment to the widow in so and so Central Government Undertaking. They are making such announcements...*(Interruptions)*... I do not want to mention that. They are telling that they are going to give employment to her in the NTPC. There is no reference to this effect in the statement. I would request the hon. Minister to clarify whether they are going to provide employment to the widow in the NTPC or not. Thank you.

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA (Jharkhand) : Sir, the statement, in paragraph7, states very clearly, "The Taliban and its backers bear the responsibility for the consequences of this outrageous act". Now, the Government of India has clearly come to the conclusion that Taliban and its backers are responsible for this. I have seen a statement, two days ago, from President Karzai of Afghanistan, where he had enquired from Taliban whether they were responsible for the killing of Raman Kutty and he had asked Mulla Umar of Taliban to come clear on this. Now, this raises a doubt whether the Government of Afghanistan also believes that Taliban is behind it because the statement of President Karzai raises a question mark. And who are the backers of Taliban? Because the Government of India is very clear about the Taliban and its backers. I would like to know from the hon. Raksha Mantri who the backers are. This becomes, especially important in view of the controversy which surrounds the so-called statement of the National Security Advisor, which was very widely covered in the national media over two days. He spoke somewhere in Kerala and it was covered by some of the newspapers on the first day and by the whole national media on the second day. I am aware of the fact that the hon. Raksha Mantri had denied this in the other House. But I would like to know from the hon. Raksha Mantri what exactly the National Security Advisor said about the involvement of Pakistan and how the entire media misunderstood what he said.

Sir, the statement is economical on facts. So, I have to go into the statement issued by the Ministry of External Affairs. This statement of the

hon. Raksha Mantri does not give us a detailed idea of what efforts were made. It is a question which has bothered the hon. Members of this House. But the statement issued by the Ministry of External Affairs on 23rd November, after Raman Kutty was done to death, says, "The Government also worked with its own network of contacts in Afghanistan to this end." Now, you got in touch with the Government of Afghanistan and, according to this statement, you got in touch with your network contacts in Afghanistan. I understand from the media that the hon. Raksha Mantri has also informed the other House that Pakistan was also contacted and when Pakistan was contacted, the Government of India was informed that since Pakistan did not have contacts with Taliban any more, they were not in a position to do anything. Has the Government of India accepted this statement of the Government of Pakistan that they did not have any contact with Taliban? Sir, we are all aware that in the south and east of Afghanistan, unfortunately, at the best of times, the situation has been very unsafe. All our establishments there have always been in danger of being attacked and there has been danger to life and limbs of our personnel. Now, therefore, the question is: Was Pakistan contacted? What was the response of Pakistan? Did the Government of India accept that response of Pakistan? Who are the backers of Taliban?

The final question, or, the last but one question, which I would like to ask is: Was any autopsy carried out after we recovered the body of Raman Kutty? We have a statement again from the External Affairs Ministry on the 22nd November which says that when the news came that he had been killed, the External Affairs Ministry contacted Afghanistan Government, and that they had stated that they did not have any confirmation. It further went on to say, " We are in constant touch with Afghanistan authorities who have stated that they have no such confirmation and that their efforts to seek the safe release of the hostages are still continuing". Therefore, if this was the state of information of the Government of India, when he had already been killed, we had given the impression that efforts were made to get him released. What exactly was the situation there?

Finally, what I would like to know from the hon. Raksha Mantri is that we have committed something like 500 million dollars worth of assistance to Afghanistan. A large number of Indians are working in all parts of Afghanistan in various projects.

Now, for the safety of our Missions in Afghanistan, the Embassy and the Consulates, we have deputed our Paramilitary Force. Will the

Government of India take up this issue of safety and security of our personnel who are working in Afghanistan and persuade the Government of Afghanistan to accept the Indian security for our establishments and our working personnel in Afghanistan, especially in sensitive areas?

SHRI P.G. NARAYANAN (Tamil Nadu): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, Pakistan has been opposed to India giving technical and other forms of assistance to the new regime in Afghanistan. This is there because Islamabad already has monopoly relations with the Taliban regime in Kabul. Have our intelligence agencies received any intelligence reports about the possible role of Pakistan in the killing of the driver, Maniappan, a worker of the Border Road Organisation? Will the killing of the BRO official hamper our assistance to Afghanistan? This incident also proves that the Taliban is still active in Afghanistan with the actual support of Pakistan. Will the Government take up this issue with the State Department of the United States about the role of Pakistan in aiding and abetting terrorism in our neighbouring countries? After this tragic incident, what action has been taken by the Government to ensure the safety and security of Indians who are working in Afghanistan under various schemes and assignments?

SHRI A.K. ANTONY (Kerala): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, Some of my colleagues have put many questions. I have to put only two queries. As you know, the entire Kerala State is in shock and is grief-stricken the way Maniappan was brutally killed. Apart from this shock, the problem is, nearly 20 lakh of our people are working abroad. So the entire Kerala State is anxious and lakhs of families are worried about the safety of their kith and kin who are working in terrorist-affected areas. After this tragic incident, what steps is the Government of India taking to give protection to our workers who are working in terrorist-affected areas like the Taliban and other countries? The Government must take all precautions to see that our workers, who are working abroad, especially in terrorist-affected countries, are fully protected.

Secondly, the Government of India first annouced a compensation of Rs. 10 lakhs, but somehow or the other, some change was made. The latest report is that the Government of India will give Rs. 5 lakhs and the State Government will also give Rs. 5 lakhs. My request to the hon. Minister is, let the Government of India give Rs. 10 lakhs which they had announced earlier. Apart from that the widow of the driver should be given a permanent employment in one of the offices of Government of India. Sir, the office of the NTPC is very near to her house. If she can be given employment in NTPC, it will be very safe for her.

Thirdly, the children of the deceased should be allowed to complete their higher studies, even up to the college level, free of cost. In view of this tragic incident, I would like to have an assurance from the hon. Minister that the Government of India would do these things in consultation with the State Government.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI (Kerala): Sir, I don't want to repeat what the other hon. Members have already said. Several elaborate clarifications have been sought. I fully endorse what Mr. Antony has said that the originally sanctioned amount of Rs. 10 lakhs should be paid, that the higher education to his children should be made free and employment to his wife, in NTPC or wherever it is, has to be ensured. Apart from this, two or three basic questions arise. No.1; I would like to know whether any channel is available to contact the terrorists at any point of time. Like, in Iraq, there are various channels through which you can reach the terrorists. But, are there any such channels in Afghanistan? Secondly, I would like to know whether the Government of India is working under some constraints. I ask this because I want to know whether the Afghan Government itself can handle the situation, or, whether we can send our forces to protect our men in that country.

Sir, it is unfortunate that such an incident is being politicised; instead we have to look at the reality. It is a very unfortunate thing. Even Maniappan's father has said that he is satisfied with the efforts of the Government of India. I can show you the newspaper clipping where he has said like that. This is a kind of situation where we are all united on one point that the family should be protected, that such an incident should no recur. Sir, there are 46 Keralites alone working with the BRO, and they all come under the BSF. The BSF is a unified institution, and the paramilitary forces come under them. So, Maniappan, even though was employed as a driver, belonged to BSF category. So, in respect of these 46 Keralites and the other Indians — it is a natinoal question — who are working there, what steps have been taken to protect them? And, has any warning been given to tell them how they have to guard themselves in their place of work?

So, Sir, basically, we want that more monetary benefits should be given to his family members for their livelihood as they have lost their lone bread-earning member in the family. It is for the Governmnet of India to take that responsibility and make them lead a better life.

PROF. P.J. KURIAN (Kerala): Sir, my colleagues have already sought so many clarifications that there is nothing much left for me. I have to only seek two or three pointed clarifications.

The hon. Minister's statement says that the family would receive a total amount of about Rs. 9 lakhs as compensation and benefits. Whatever benefits were due to his family by way of provident fund, gratuity, etc., they are anyway to be given. But what matters is the compensation money that is to be given by the Government. Secondly, Sir, initially, it was announced that Rs. 10 lakhs would be paid as compensation to his family members. But, I read in one of the newspapers in Kerala that the Centre would give Rs.5 lakhs and the States would give Rs.5 lakhs. My another point of clarification is with regard to another newspaper report that the wife of late Mr. Maniappan, would be given the same salary which he was receiving in India until his death. But nothing of that sort has been mentioned here. It is no doubt necessary that she should be given employment somewhere. But, because it is a very special case, — it should not be treated like any other normal case — the wife of the deceased person should be given the same salary which he received in India till death. That was indeed announced, and it was mentioned in the newspapers. That is why I am seeking this clarification.

Sir, my next clarification is this. It has been stated by some important officials that Pakistan had a link in this incident. Now, what is the Government's finding on that? Finally, Sir, in view of all that happened, want are the steps that the Government is taking to see that the lives of our people working abroad, especially in the terrorist-affected areas, are protected?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Shri Chandran Pillai. I think your colleagues have already exhausted all the points. You can just be brief.

SHRI K. CHANDRAN PILLAI (Kerala) : Basically, majority of points have been covered. I want to mention some aspects of it. First of all, the statement is not at all satisfactory. That is my observation. I am not seeking clarification on this. The entire State of Kerala and its people were deeply dissatisfied in the manner in which this episode happened. Yashwantji rightly pointed out certain aspects. I am just mentioning it, and I am also seeking clarification on the same point. The statement uses the terminology like 'the Taliban and its backers'. This is somewhat an ambiguous statement. I want an unambiguous statement on this issue. What is the intention of the Government in putting the word 'backers' there in the statement? In between the actual killing and the confirmation of killing, one day, 24 hours passed. We, actually, as a responsible nation, from the Central Government in Delhi gave the impression that we were making efforts to ensure a safe release of the person. A little bit more clarification

is required on this particular aspect as to how it happened. So, these are the two points on which I seek clarifications from the hon. Minister.

Further, as far as compensation and benefits to the family are concerned, hon. Members have already mentioned about it. On employment, instead of seeking clarification from the hon. Minster, I would like to have an assurance from the hon. Minister that employment would be given to his wife. The statement has used words 'liberalised family pension'. I want to know the definition of that. What does this 'liberalised family pension' mean? It should be defined properly.

As far as compensation is concerned, I want to know the sanctity of the figure '9'. Even after thinking alot, I could not reach to any reasonable conclusion. How have the Government reached to the figure of '9'? Is something behind in putting it there, or, you have simply put it there?

Finally, Sir, Mr. Vayalar Ravi made a point that the Left Front people politicised the issue in the State of Kerala. No; I am disputing that. There was acute dissatisfaction prevailing in the State over this entire episode because the Government of India failed to get that man released safely. That was the only thing. If that is politics, that politics worked there. Thank you, Sir.

डा. कुमकुम राय (बिहार): माननीय महोदय, मैं केवल दो-तीन बिन्दुओं को ही स्पष्टीकरण के रूप में उठाना चाहती हूं। अभी जो घटना घटी है, वह सिर्फ केरल या सिर्फ स्वर्गीय कुट्टी की ही समस्या नहीं है, सरकारी स्तर एवं गैर सरकारी स्तर पर, अफगानिस्तान और दूसरी अरब कंट्रीज में बहुत सारे लोगों को भेजा जाता है। कुट्टी जी सरकारी स्तर पर गए थे, तो उनके लिए तमाम पारिवारिक सहयोग और पेन्शन इत्यादि की बात की जा रही हैं। मैं सरकार से, माननीय मंत्री महोदय से यह जानना चाहती हूं कि गैर सरकारी स्तर पर भी इस तरह के लोगों को वहां पर भेजा जाता है, तो क्या उनकी इस कार्यवाही पर रोक लगाने के लिए भी सरकार कुछ सोच रही है या फिर विदेशों में काम करने वाले, गैर सरकारी स्तर पर एवं निजी स्तर पर जाने वाले लोगों की सुरक्षा के लिए विदेश स्तर पर कुछ उपाय कर रही है।

श्री कुट्टी से संबंधित दूसरा प्रश्न मैं यह पूछना चाहती हूं कि उनकी विधवा को नौकरी देने की जो बात है, उन्हें किस स्तर की नौकरी दी जाएगी और कब तक यह नौकरी दे दी जाएगी और उन्हें जो पारिवारिक...(व्यवधान)

श्री उपसभापति : वह सवाल तो क्लेरिफिकेशन में पहले ही दे दिया गया है, इसलिए उसे आप रिपीट मत कीजिए।

डा॰ कुमकुम राय (बिहार) : जी हां, ठीक है, मेरा प्रश्न उनकी सुरक्षा और पेंशन से संबंधित है कि ये मसले कब तक निपटा दिए जाएंगे।

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY (Pondicherry): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, I thank you very much for giving me this opportunity. I will follow your rules; you need not tell me.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : I am just looking at you. *(Interruptions).*

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY : That is why I understood. Sir, it is in everybody's knowledge that when the Zaranj-Delaram road is built, Pakistan will lose its importance. That is the reason given by the Afghan officials. Sir, the moot point that arises here is, there is a clear-cut statement given by the Government official, especially the National Security Adviser of the Government of India that Pakistan is behind the killing of Mr. Kutty.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: He has denied it.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY : But, there are other official reports. He might have denied it, but there are other official reports. Even there is a corelation in it. The Afghan officials said that Pakistan is opposed to this road because if it was built,Pakistan's importance would be lost. That is number one.

That is number one. Number two, Taliban is having very good contacts with the Pakistan administration or Pakistan Government. Therefore, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Defence Minister whether the Pakistan hand is confirmed behind this act of killing of Maniappan, whether the Government of India officially contacted the Pakistan Government to know whether its involvement is there in that or not. Thirdly, the Prime Minister condoled them and has expressed his concern about the people who are working in Afghanistan and he also formed a group of officials comprising the officials of Ministry of Home, Ministry of External Affairs and Ministry of Defence from 20th last month to till this date.What is their finding and what have they arrived at about this killing as also for the safety and security of Indians working not only in Government projects but also in private projects?

DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR (Andhra Pradesh): Mr. Deputy Chairman,Sir, on behalf of my party and on my own behalf, I condemn the killing of Mr. Raman Kutty. Sir, I do not want to repeat the points. I only insist on the hon. Defence Minister, through you, Sir, three things.

One is, Rs. 9 lakhs is not enough for the survival of his family and suitable compensation should be given. Enhancement of this can be done. Secondly, for his children's education, the Government should consider sympathetically providing free education up to the degree-level; even if they want to go for any professional-level, the Government should consider sympathetically and encourage them. Thirdly, Mrs. Raman Kutty should be provided with a suitable job so that they can lead a comfortable life.

SHRI DINESH TRIVEDI (West Bengal): Sir, I promise that I would not take more than one minute. When we are talking about condemnation, the whole House, I am sure, condemns this. Sir, the question is, when it comes to compensation, there cannot be any compensation for a life lost. That is for certain. Why cannot we think about some kind of a system whereby you do not humiliate the family? We are a great democracy, we are not in the age of Mughal-raj where somebody says Rs. 9 lakhs, 10 lakhs, 5 lakhs....Why cannot we have something which is transparent and which is fixed. Would the Government think about it? Let us know what steps would you take so that these kind of things are, perhaps, avoided.

श्री मूलचन्द मीणा (राजस्थान) : उपसभापति महोदय, अफगानिस्तान में तालिबान द्वारा सीमा सड़क संगठन के ड्राईवर कुट्टी की हत्या के बाद जो अरब कन्ट्रीज के अंदर हिन्दुस्तानी रह गए हैं, उनके सामने बहुत बड़ी समस्या है। मैं माननीय मंत्री महोदय से जानना चाहूंगा कि इस संबंध में भारत के राजदूत ने संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ के सुरक्षा परिषद में अपनी कोई चर्चा रखी है और उस चर्चा के ऊपर सुरक्षा परिषद के सदस्यों की क्या प्रतिक्रिया है? और क्या तालिबान के खिलाफ सामूहिक रूप से उनके ट्रेनिंग कैम्पों को मिटाने के लिए कोई कार्रवाई करने के बारे में सुरक्षा परिषद में विचार हुआ है?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, I am grateful to the hon. Members who have made their observations and sought clarifications from the statement which I laid on the Table of the House on 28th November. Sir, all of us agree that this is a tragic accident and of this tragic incident, all of us feel a little bit helpless also because what happened there and the way in which it happened, we did not have control over the situation. First of all, I would like to clarify one position, the first step Government took and how we responded to it. I would mention certain facts and it is true that I did not mention those facts in the original statement because it would have been much longer. The incident happened on 19th November at 8.00 p.m., 20.00 hrs. Then BRO unit informed the embassy and Ambassador

1.00 P.M.

Rakesh Sood was contacted at 8.30. The information was that four persons have been kidnapped including one Indian. "Four persons" was the original information which was received. They were missing from the Zaranj-Delaram Highway, which is being constructed by the BRO. Ambassador Sood immediately contacted the National Security Advisor of Afghanistan, Zalari Rasool and requested him to immediately carry on search and investigation work. Then after contacting the National Security Advisor of Afghanistan, he contacted the Foreign Office here and the Foreign Office's Joint Secretary concerned immediately contacted the Cabinet Secretariat and the officer looking after Afghanistan to institute an inquiry through Cabinet Secretariat channel. This operation was on throughout the whole night. The BRO Unit also contacted the Governor of Nimroz, the Provincial Governor of Afghanistan where this construction activity is going on.

Next day early morning at 4.00 a.m. the Chief Security Liaison Officer working with the BRO, alongwith the security forces left Zaranj for searching the vehicle and the personnel. Then the first thing the Indian Embassy did was that they requested the Afghan Government for enhancing the security of the Indian companies. Our Ambassador continuously remained in touch with the National Security Advisor. Here also the Crisis Management Group in the Secretariat started functioning. The first information, which we got from the Reuters, was that Reuters agency in Kandahar received a call from one Mr. Suari Mohd. Yusuf claiming to be the spokesman of the Taliban and they asked for immediate suspension of construction work and withdrawal of the BRO personnel within 48 hours, otherwise, the hostages would be killed. Immediately the Ambassador contacted the office of President Karzai. President Karzai immediately called the Afghan Cabinet and the task force was set up and the task force was entrusted with the task of carrying on search and rescue operation. In this process the entire exercise went on. Now, certain very salient points have emerged. One hon. Member has asked whether we tried to contact the other personnel, other channels including the tribals. The answer is, yes. Separately our Ambassador tried and actually established contact with three important personnel whom he thought could help in rescuing the persons and at least establishing contact with the abductors.

At that stage, from the very beginning they tried to establish contact with the abductors to ascertain actually what they wanted. You will have to keep in mind that at eight in the evening the person was abducted and the next day at 4.00 P.M. in the afternoon, the news was broken by Reuter that they are demanding withdrawal of BRO and suspension of construction

work. So the contact which the Ambassador there established was the Sibgatulla Mujhadadi, former President and Foreign Head of Reconciliation Commission which is talking to the moderate Taliban. The second person was P. Gylani, head of the Qadari Sect and prominent religious leader. The third was Arif Moorjai, Tribal Chief and former Minister of the Tribal Affairs and all of them assured that they tried to establish contact with the abductors and tried to help. Here, the Prime Minister took the meeting himself with the concerned officers and directed that every effort should be made to ensure that the person concerned is rescued and the family members are also contacted. BRO officials remained in constant touch with the family members. The group which was set up—I would not like to go to all the details, that is the normal practice—they constantly monitored the situation, in addition to contacting the Afghan Government, constantly being in touch with the national security advisor of Afghanistan, being in touch with the office of the President and personally talking to the President. Afghan Cabinet met twice to assess the situation and do their best. Our Ambassador contacted the Iranian Ambassador, the US Ambassador and also the Italian Ambassador there because Italy being the current head of the international security force delployed in Afghanistan. So all these contacts were established and efforts were made. It is not correct to say that efforts were no made. Now, these exercises continued from 19th night till 21st. Then Mr. Jaswant Singh said, 'why was there a difference between MEA statement and my statement'? There were two news. The first news came that some news agency visited the call allegedly from Taliban claiming that the Indian hostage has been killed. But still, as the hon. Member who was a very distinguished Minister in the earlier Government, knew very well that simply we do not depend on the newspaper report. We wanted to ascertain it from the Afghan Government. They were saying that 'no, we have not been able to' and they were saying that the information which we are having, 'no direct contact', none of the parties concerned was able to establish direct contact with the abductors in the Taliban. All these contacts which were little, was established and that contact was indirect and through those indirect channels which was received said that 'no, it is not confirmed.' Later on, the next day when the body was found, naturally, there was no question of having any doubt and thereafter the whole thing was done and this is the effort which was made. So, it is not correct to say that we did not make any effort.

Now, Sir, a number of questions have been raised by the hon. Members about the security, about the involvement, about the compensation and about the observation of the NSA in Kerala.

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: Before you come to that, Mr. Minister, I would like to know, have you contacted Pakistan?

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: I am just telling you that Pakistan was contacted, but not formally. You understood very well what I mean to say. I shared the information, which we received, with the other House. Yes. At one point of time, we had contacted but they said that they could not help us out. When they said that they could not help us, at that point of time, our efforts were not to find out who is responsible or to find the guilty. Our entire exercise was directed him out, through whatever sources, and to save the person concerned. Therefore, there was only one point before us undirectional effort to save the person concerned. Therefore, it was not the issue, at that point of time, whether we should talk to them or we should not talk to them. It was assessed, at that point of time by the decision-makers, to help the authorities concerned to trace out the person. So, we tried to contact them. Therefore, we contacted them.

Now, a question arose what arrangements could be made in regard to the security. We are concerned. There is no doubt that the Government of India is concerned with it. There are a large number of our people not only in Afghanistan but in the whole of West Asia. And, some of these areas are of concern from the security point of view, of concern. I am not making any reflection. But, at the same time, to ensure the safety and security of each and every Indian, to make any foolproof arrangement, is also not possible. We have to depend, largely, on the local Government and on their cooperation. This is what we are doing. In this particular case, yes, we have our own force, 38 ITBP personnel, deputed there. We have suggested and we have already increased the number. The Director of BRO went there to look into the entire arrangements. Naturally, we are to depend heavily on the security arrangements provided by the local Government. Our efforts can be supplemented. Otherwise, our option is to close the shop and come back. Exactly this is the desire of Taliban. They don't want this project to be constructed which will help Afghanistan to have access to Iran. Therefore, it was necessary to state, 'Yes. The project will continue.'

Otherwise, that is the demand that Talibans are making. Therefore, it was stated then and I am now reiterating that we will not succumb to these types of pressures. We will continue to help Afghanistan and particulary this project. If we succumb to the pressure and most respectfully, Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, I would like to submit that nowhere, in no part of the world, you can buy peace by surrendering, compromising or succumbing to the pressure of terrorists, whatever be the cost, whatever be the price.

Sometimes, yes, we have to pay a very heavy price. But, perhaps, as a nation as a country, we shall have to deal with it because we are the worst victims, inside and outside.

Our diplomats have been killed. We could not protect them. But, every life is equal. Therefore, I do agree with my good friend, Mr. Dinesh Trivedi, that 'what compensation' talks a little bit inhuman. But what should we do? This is the phraseology. We have to express our sympathy in some terminology. And, that terminology is being used. Therefore, it was necessary to tell them that the project will continue. It is necessary to reiterate that our hand of assistance to Afghanistan remains intact; we will continue to help them; and we would like to complete this project. And, whatever logistic arrangements will have to be made, and supports to be given, will continue in consultation with the local Goverment. We will continue to do so. And, surely the Director General, BRO, will look into the situation. However, we need not send those types of workers, which are available locally. So, to that extent, out responsibility will be a little less. But these are the details to be worked out.

Now, I would like to touch upon the second issue. Excuse me I am not totally going by the reports of newspapers. I do not know Malyalam. Therefore, there is no question of reading those newspapers. But, I would just like to state the actual position. When I, in my statement, mentioned about the compensation of rupees nine lakhs, I had made some calculations and had given a round figure. It is a compensation under the Workmen's Compensation Act. The gratuity, death-linked insurance, Central Government Employees Group Insurance Scheme, saving under the CGGIS, *ex gratia* lump sum contribution, accident insurance, Border Road Special Relief Fund, GREF Benevolent Relief Fund, all these things, if taken together, come to Rs. 8,82,202/-. So, I had just mentioned it in a round figure of rupees nine lakhs. In addition to that, in addition, what has been announced by the Prime Minister is not in sharing with the State Government. It is from the Prime Minister's Relief Fund. Therefore, it is not linked with the State Government. Whatever the State Government is giving, that is the State Government's contribution. If the State Government gives rupees five lakhs, then, it will be rupees nine lakhs, plus five lakhs, plus five lakhs. But, I do not know whether the State Government has announced any compensation or not. I am drawing this conclusion from your observations.

Then, somebody wanted to know what the 'liberalised pension' is. A liberalised pension is the last pay drawn by the officer concerned; otherwise

pension is always less than the last pay drawn. But here, liberalised pension is exactly the last pay drawn, that is, Rs. 7,260/- per month. So, that will be the pension that will be given to the widow of the deceased officer.

You have also suggested about free education to their children. Surely, I will have to talk to the Prime Minister. But I agree—as up to secondary education, it is free in Kerala—at least, up to graduation the expenditure of the education of two children should be borne by the organization concerned. That we will ensure.

Frankly speaking, Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, we had decided to provide a job to the widow, but you will excuse me, I has asked my people not to talk of job to the widow, at this moment, when she is undergoing a tremendous trauma. I thought, at this moment, when she has just lost her husband, it would not be appropriate to talk of job, whether it is in the NTPC or wherever it is possible in any public sector undertaking. But, we have decided to provide a job. But, surely, we agree that it cannot be just announced here, as the things have to be worked out. So,it will be worked out on that method.

Many other policy matters and other issues have come, but I would not like to respond to them, and I would not like to go, into the whole psychology or philosophy of terrorism of Talibans.

You were asking about the backers of the Taliban. Taliban is a terrorist outfit, and all over the world, terrorist outfits are backers of the Taliban. It is not necessarily to be confined to a State or to a geographical entity. International terrorism is the biggest menace to the world today. That is why they are trying to establish their links. And, surely, it is for us. Who believe in democracy, who believe in peace, to ensure that the international community should assert itself to fight collectively against this greatest menace to peace and tranquillity. And, that is the exact thing which we are doing. Whenever our Prime Minister goes to Moscow and has discussions with President Putin, or he has discussions with President Bush, or President Tony Blair, this is one common thing, that is, how to fight this biggest menace.

In regard to the statement of Mr. Narayanan, I explained it on the floor of the other house. I also read it in the newspaper. So, in the morning when I knew that I am going to make this statement, I wanted to ascertain from him. So, what I found out from him, and he stated that while having

conversation with the media persons there, he was explaining the growth of the Talibans. Yes, Pakistan was in close link with Taliban, but that was the story of the past, he reffered to that. He did not mention that in this assassination, Pakistan has hand or Pakistan is responsible for that. So, after talking to him, I explained that position when the Leader of Opposition, after I made that statement, wanted to seek the clarification. In that House, there is no system of providing clarification to the statement but with the permission of the Speaker and making a departure from the rules, I explained the position because I also did not want to convey a wrong message in other areas.

Now, somebody has stated that this statement is not comprehensive. Yes, if you say that from factual point of view I did not give a blow-by-blow account of what steps were taken from the time of abduction to the recovery of the body, from that point of fact, it is not comprehensive. But, at the same time, you will appreciate that this statement would have run into 6-7 pages, but I wanted to be a little brief. And, I knew that in this House there is a system to seek clarifications and we must stick to that. But in this statement, Mr. Premachandran also took exception that why did I say it outside the House when I was to make the statement. Please remember, the Ministers are prohibited to make any policy statement outside the House when the Parliament is in session. But Ministers are not prohibited to give any factual statement or to state any fact when the House is not in session. This restriction is limited to any policy statement.

Therefore, Sir, I think most of the points which the hon. Members have reffered to have been covered. I did not deliberately want to respond to the issues of terrorism and how to fight this menace because that is a larger issue. I wanted to confine myself to the statement. Again I express my regret and deep condolence to the loss of a young life. There is no word. In no way we can compensate either Mrs. Bindu or the two orphan children. Whatever we may say, whatever words we may express here will be meaningless to her. I only wish, as I believe in God, let God give her enough strength to meet the situation and bring up her two kids. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. (*Interruptions*)

श्री उपसभापति: अब क्या है? Everything is clear now... (*Interruptions*)...

SHRI SHARAD ANANTRAO JOSHI (Maharashtra): Did the Government at any stage seek help from the United States or Israel or alert on airports for the rescue operation...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Yesterday, another Indian worker was detained in Iraq...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Nothing to do with this ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Nothing to do with that, but, Sir, yesterday the matter was...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Now, hon. Members, it is 1.20 p.m. We have 30 Special Mentions. Should we take up after lunch or before lunch?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: After lunch.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: So, the House is adjourned for one hour for lunch.

The House then adjourned for lunch
at twenty minutes past one of the clock.

The House reassembled after lunch at twenty one minutes past two of the clock, MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN in the Chair.

SPECIAL MENTIONS

Concern over variation in Drug Prices in the Country

SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI (Andhra Pradesh): Sir, I would like to start my Special Mention by giving an example about the variation in the amount spent by two patients to treat the high blood pressure with exactly the same medicine and dose.

One has been prescribed the Amlodac brand of amlodipine that costs Rs. 550 per year. While another spends four times more, i.e., Rs. 2200, as his doctor has prescribed a more expensive brand Amlogard.

Both these brands are marketed by top quality reputed pharma manufacturers.

Is it fair? Should such a state of affairs continue?

Sir, hundreds of similar cases exist, with two brands of the same medicine being priced very differently.

Indian pharma companies annually spend over Rs. 5340 crore to promote their brands to the medical profession. That is around Rs. 1,33,000 per doctor per year. That whole cost, needless to say, is recovered from the patients.